provide local hospitality for the persons deputed under the Work Plan.

(6) The MoU shall enter into force on the date of its signing and shall remain valid for a period of five years and shall automatically be renewed for the subsequent period of five years unless either party notifies the other in writing, six months before the expiration of the validity period, of its intention to terminate it. However, the expiry and termination of the MoU shall not prejudice the completion of projects already in progress.

Enquiry into suicides by Farmers

139. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to suite:

(a) whether it is a fact that hundreds of farmers have committed suicides during the last six months in various parts of the country;

(b)if so, the details of such suicidal deaths, State-wise, during the last six months;

(c)whether Government have conducted any official survey/enquiry regarding the reasons behind such suicides; if so, the details of enquiry so conducted indicating the recommendationsi-emedial measures suggested; and

(d) whether Government have paid any compensation to the family of the de ceased farmers; if so, the details thereof State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have reported total suicidal deaths as 236, 29 and 51, respectively. There has been no reports of suicidal deaths from other States.

(c) and (d) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to provide relief to the people affected by natural calamities. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing additional resources in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commissions appointed from time to time. In addition to the annual allocation under Calamity Relief Fund, additional assistance is provided, if any, from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR), in the event of a calamity of rare severity. An additional assistance of Rs. 12.00 crore was released to the Government of Andhra Pradesh during 1997-98 from the NFCR in the wake of damage to crops, mainly cotton, due to pest attack. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has sanctioned cx-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased while the Government of Karnataka has sanctioned ex-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh each in 13 suicide cases and the Government of Maharashtra has paid Rs. l.OO lakh per family in 12 suicide cases having direct linkage with crop Ioss/ indebtedness and Rs. SO.OOfy-per family in 7 cases having some linkage with crpp loss. In addition, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has announced several package measures of relielf to the affected farming families and the Government of Karnataka has released Rs. 4.00 crore as one-time assistance in the form of input subsidy to the affected small and marginal farmers.

News Caption 'Panic Grips Farmers as virus wipes out Cotton Crop'

140. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item cap tioned 'Panic grips farmers as virus wipes out cotton crop' published in the Ob server Business and Politics, dated the 15th October, 1997;

(b)if so, the details and facts thereon;

(c)whether India being an exporter of cotton shall have to import it;

(d)if so, the reasons therefor; and